

سفارة المملكة العربية السعودية
في واشنطن

ROYAL EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA
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WASHINGTON, D. C. 20037

OFFICE OF
THE AMBASSADOR

March 25, 2010

Mr. Kevin Willeutts
Deputy Director
Office of Child Labor, Forced labor
and Human Trafficking
U.S. Department of Labor
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Mr. Willeutts:

I am responding to your letter dated March 4, 2010, requesting information on Saudi Arabia's efforts in combating forced labor and child labor. Attached please find information on the Kingdom's efforts in this regard.

With best regards,


Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir
Ambassador

Memorandum on Combating Forced Labor and Child Abuse

The Ministry of Labor has undertaken many measures to translate into action the importance placed by the Government of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia upon the promotion of human rights and the combating of human trafficking. As the practice of human trafficking contravenes the true values and ideals of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom has always been determined to uproot this phenomenon. In doing so, Saudi Arabia is driven by its well-established principles and values. Sharia law, the basic source of legislation in the Kingdom, prohibits human trafficking. Child labor is not at this point a phenomenon in Saudi Arabia. It is important to differentiate between child labor and children begging on the streets. It should be noted that begging children, along with their enablers, are non-Saudi nationals who do not carry residence cards.

Child labor and forced labor are among the most important issues to the Ministry of Labor, as they affect other aspects of society. For that reason, Chapter 10 of the Labor Act is devoted to the employment of minors. Article 161 stipulates that it is illegal to employ minors (defined as those who are between 15 and 18 years old) in dangerous jobs, harmful industries or any other work that may jeopardize their health, safety or morals. Article 162 indicates that it is illegal to employ any person under 15 years old.

Forced labor is prohibited pursuant to Section 1 of Article 61 in Chapter 5 of the Labor Act. Whoever violates these provisions will be penalized according to the penalties stipulated in Chapter 15, so long as there are no severe penalties stated in any other Act. This applies to workers in all age groups.

Adding to that, the Ministry continues to show greater interest in prohibiting all forms of child labor exploitation through the following measures.

1. Saudi Arabia joined Agreement No. 182 on April 15, 2001, which was enacted by the World Labor Organization (WLO) banning the worst forms of child employment. The agreement commits member states to immediately undertake actions necessary to prevent the worst forms of child labor and to get rid of already existing forms. This agreement is seen as the widest in scope and the quickest to be endorsed in the history of the WLO.
2. Royal Decree No. M/13000, issued on June 27, 2002, sets the minimum age camel jockeys at 18 years. Punishment for violators includes the disqualification of riders younger than 18

from participating in races and denying the camel owners employing them from winning any prizes.

3. Cabinet resolution No. 83, dated March 25, 2007, orders the drafting of a national plan to address the problem of begging.
4. Cabinet resolution No. 20879, dated February 18, 2004, lists professions in which minors and adolescents are not allowed to work. The areas include employment in areas which would expose them to radiation, extreme heat, electrocution, harmful frequencies, labor which causes physical pain.
5. The Ministry of Labor decision No. 738/1, issued on July 3, 2004, bans all forms of human trafficking.
6. The Ministry of Labor conducts, through its nationwide offices, regular investigative visits to all premises to ensure that the Labor Act and its derivative by-laws and decisions are implemented. Its focus is on industrial complexes, shops and machine-shops. Praise be to Allah, no violations have been registered other than minor instances that do not constitute a phenomenon.
7. The government exerts great efforts to curb the smuggling of children meant to be used as beggars. It is worth mentioning in this respect the recommendations of the Consultative Saudi-Yemeni Commission regarding child smuggling. Most important among these are the following points:
 - Any form of child smuggling is a punishable crime.
 - Smuggled children shall be treated as victims of smuggling. They should be provided the proper protection, care and legal assistance.
 - Awareness programs must be implemented to provide education about this problem, its impact and the dangers it poses to the two countries. A coordinating mechanism in this respect is required.

As for exploitation for sexual purposes, the Child Protection Act, soon to be issued pending approval from the relevant authorities, stipulates in Article 4 Paragraph B that children must be protected against all forms of sexual abuse.

8. The Ministry of Social Affairs undertook following tasks:
 - Establishment of the General Directorate for Social Protection. This has been endorsed by circular cable No. 16/3024, dated February 21, 2005, issued by the Minister of Interior. The Minister formed social protection commissions throughout the Kingdom in

order to confront domestic violence directed against children, women and other vulnerable groups.

- Establishment of a social guidance unit to provide social, psychological, educational and judicial consultations to social groups through a toll free phone line (800-124-5005).
- Establishment of a center to receive complaints of harm, violence and exploitation targeting children and women.
- The Ministry supervises delinquent minors and provides them with preventive and treatment programs and a whole host of diversified programs and activities.
- Establishment of a center to shelter foreigner children involved in begging in collaboration with the embassies of the countries to which they belong and with UNICEF.

In addition, the Ministry of Social Affairs agreed to issue a license for the “Women’s Charitable Society for Family Protection,” the first society in the Kingdom that specializes in protecting women and children against violence. The goal of this society is to guarantee respect for women, children and the elderly. It aims also to protect families against violence and to design programs and workshops to train those who work to educate society about children’s and women’s rights. The ultimate goal is to establish a strategy to curb violence and to ensure the necessary transparency.

9. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is eager to further enhance its role in providing humanitarian aid to assist children all over the world. In appreciation of the Kingdom’s generous and continuous contributions to child welfare in all corners of the world, UNICEF issued on April 11, 2007 its humanitarian report for 2006 from Riyadh.

The Kingdom signed a memorandum of understanding with the Yemeni government to coordinate efforts against the trafficking of children from Yemen into Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the Republic of Yemen was provided with support and assistance from UNICEF to establish child care facilities to shelter detained children.

10. In February 2007 a training session was organized in Riyadh, in collaboration with the Virginia-based Center for Combating Human Trafficking, focused on combating child trafficking.